

Margaret Williams
1922 - 2007

Family History

Mom and Dad were married June 17, 1919. I came along May 13, 1922. They moved to Murray Avenue when I was just a few months old and this has been my home ever since.

I was a few months old when we moved into the house. My dad's name was Edward Makin Williams. Makin must have been a family name. Mom was born November 22, 1898; Daddy was twelve years older so that would make him born in 1886 on January 23rd. He was born somewhere in Philadelphia. His mother is buried in Magnolia Cemetery in Philadelphia. My father had very little schooling; fourth grade was his limit. But could he add! As fast as a computer.

My mother's maiden name was Tomlinson. Tomlinson Road (in Philadelphia) was named for the Tomlinson family. There was a big farm over by Bustleton Avenue that belonged to Tomlinson's. Grandma was Anna B. Derr who married Elsworth Tomlinson. When my parents were married they had no place to go, so they lived with Grandma Williams in Wissinoming. Then my parents lived on the Tomlinson farm in Somerton.

My grandmother and grandfather lived on the farm where Holy Redeemer Village now stands. My mom and Aunt Helen were born there. The house was torn down but the barn is still there. My mom walked from there down the Pike to Hollywood. The church there, that was Meadowbrook School. When the weather was bad my grandfather would take her on the horse and buggy and in the snow on a sled. She was from around here originally.

I was born and a few months later they moved to 2540 Murray Avenue in 1923. It was not a new house. Mrs. Slugg lived here before we were here. I think they paid \$8000 for it. It was during the Depression and whomever they paid ran off with the money. They had to refinance it and do it all over again. They didn't pay it off until I was in college.

Daddy being a carpenter, work was scarce during the Depression. The high school cornerstone was dated 1926 and they needed someone to clean the floors. Mom went over and on her hands and knees and scrubbed all the wooden floors. For pay someone gave her a worn leopard coat. Then Mom started working in the school cafeteria in 1931 after my grandfather died.

My dad was born in Philadelphia. He was one of 10 children. Four died at an early age. Three boys and 3 girls lived. His father died when Daddy was 12, so he only got a 4th grade education. But he was a whiz at math. Daddy was a Jack of All Trades. Over the years he was a store keeper, a butcher, a bill collector, driver for an undertaker, brick layer, stone mason, painter, and carpenter which he worked at the most. In spare time he mowed lawns and trimmed hedges. He'd do odd jobs for anyone who asked him, usually without pay. Following a heart attack and a couple of strokes, his activity was limited, but he helped in the school cafeteria for something to do. Daddy died when I was 36.

My father drove an Essex car for miles for his carpentry work. When he would come home from work, I would meet him at the foot of the driveway and hop on the running board of the Essex. That was a big thrill! He worked as a grocer and a butcher. He would go around on weekends to collect the money. Then he worked with his older brother, Arch, in carpentry. But he just had odd jobs, even up in North Jersey where he had to sleep in a chicken coop. He was up in New England working in a Sears store during the night. He finally started working as a carpenter for Wilmer Fesmire around here. Wilmer split his business from his brother, Pete. They lived in houses where Claire's Casuals used to be, next to the Lady Washington Inn, now Blue, a hair salon.

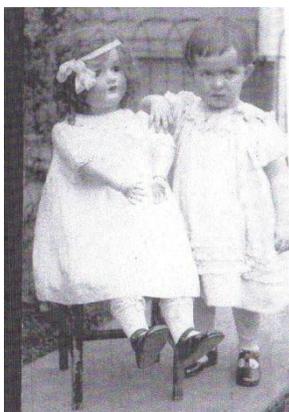
Uncle George had a fleet of cars used in funeral processions and sometimes Daddy helped by driving once if the need arose. One day Uncle George was driving home from a funeral and decided to stop in to see us for a short visit. The hearse parked in front of our house stirred up a bit of excitement. I had been sick with a bad cold for a few days. I guess the neighbors thought I was the one who was going for a ride!

We have always had someone living with us. My maternal grandparents were first and an old, old uncle was here too. After that Mom's sister and one year old daughter lived here until Aunt Helen remarried and left Anna with us. George Steinour and then Harold Shelmire were next; they were like big brothers to me. During my senior year in high school a classmate became part of the family so she could graduate from Lower Moreland. For a year a ten year old girl lived with us because of illness in her family. A junior high boy stayed with us because his family moved out of the area.

[Photo: Margaret and parents]



Mr. Brightbill, Mr. Martz and Mr. Slaybaugh also took up residence plus two other teachers who came for supper every night. After my parents died I have had "roomers" about a year for each. Now it's just Belmont, my cat, and me.



[Photo: Margaret with her favorite doll. Margaret recalled that some of her clothes would fit the doll, and vice versa]

When I was about two Grandma had a stroke at the supper table. I remember seeing her drop her cup of tea since I sat next to her in my high chair. Daddy and Grandpop carried her into the sitting room and laid her on the couch. She died that evening at age fifty-eight. That very afternoon I was sitting in her lap as we rocked in the rocking chair by the window. Her funeral service was held in our parlor.

I had my first surgery, which involved my tonsils being removed, and my first taxi cab ride around this time. I remember the bright lights overhead in the operating room and something being held above my face, ether, and talking about my dolls in the operating room. I answered their questions. Believe it or not, my tonsils grew back. When I was a senior my great Aunt Alice MacKenzie, who was a surgeon, burned them out. Of course she worked with paying patients first. As she was going in for the final burn my tonsil dropped down my throat and I swallowed it for my lunch! Then Mom and I walked to the planetarium to see the Christmas show.

I could amuse myself with most anything. A pair of scissors and the old Sears catalog, scraps of lumber, modeling mud, climbing ladders, climbing trees, playing school, being a nurse to cats or dolls, or tying myself up with old rags from the rag bag as bandages. The cats and dolls were good patients and pupils. We had no swimming pools, but an old wash tub with some water in it was fine. Once I dug a hole in the yard, poured some water in and pretended I was in the ocean



[Photo: Margaret's house,
2504 Murray Avenue]

Our kitchen and shed have no cellar underneath, just a crawl space. My yard was the playground for Murray Avenue. Murray Avenue kids included Frank Wunderlich, Raymond Somers, Philip Cataldo, Bob Van Horn, Eleanor, Mary and Edward McOwen plus all the brothers and sisters and me. Bobby, Frank and Raymond were often here. We all learned to roller skate on the sidewalk which began at the front steps and extended all the way to the outhouse in the back yard. Frank's mother tied a pillow to his hind-end to ensure a softer landing when he fell.

During the summers, the gang gathered on the high school sidewalk with wagons, scooters, tricycles, skates and foot power to play. We played hide and seek and cops and robbers. Later we heard Mrs. Somers call "Raaaaymon". That was the signal for us all to go home.

Allowances were unheard of. We earned spending money! Going to the store for people earned a few pennies or whatever change was left from the five dollars worth of groceries in the full basket. The old lady next door gave me five cents for scrubbing her floor with a scrub brush. When the deposits in my piggy bank reached on dollar, I proudly marched to the HV Bank and made a deposit in my account. We worked at home drying dishes, dusting furniture, cleaning kitchen floors, ironing hankies and pillow cases, beating rugs, and I performed the glamorous job of emptying chamber pots into a big bucket and taking the contents to the outhouse. This was unpaid labor.

Our house was three stories tall, so there were lots of steps to climb. I discovered there was more than one way to get downstairs once I had gone up. We didn't have carpet on the steps in my

day. The steps were smooth and shiny and hard. So one day I sat on the top step and slid down one, then two, then three etc. until I finally reached the bottom on my bottom. There was a neat railing at the side, so I tried a new way. Slide down the railing. I had put a pillow at the bottom, wedged into the post. That made a soft seat. I now had a new way to get down and I pretended the pillow was a saddle.

School Days

I always loved school. I cried when I left sixth grade at Red Lion Road to go to seventh grade at the school on Murray Avenue. Junior high school was harder to get accustomed to. The building was larger, there were more students since Feasterville, Siles and Trevoise sent their students to Lower Moreland for high school. Then too there were many more teachers and the class rooms were spread out over two floors, plus a basement level where the gym, locker rooms and “shop” were located.

When we grew up and became freshmen we began making money for our class treasury. We sold candy, cards, had a junior and a senior class play and watched funds increase. The senior class always took a trip to Washington, DC with all expenses paid with what we had earned. But there was a problem. The hotels and restaurants did not permit Black people in. Since we had six or seven Black classmates, they could not be included on the trip. I did not think this was fair so I did not go with my classmates on the trip. I did go to Bethayres Station to see them off.



[Photo: Margaret's Lower Moreland High School graduation photograph, 1940]

During the tenth grade I was a substitute guard on the basketball team. Girls played on one third of the court, two guards, two forwards and two centers. During eleventh grade and twelfth grade I was on the varsity team. The rules had changed and we were using half court then. I loved to play.

The junior and senior plays were fun too. Although admission was thirty five cents for adults and twenty five cents for children, we managed to make some money after the fifteen dollars royalty fee was paid. Usually the auditorium upstairs at the Red Lion School was filled. They were fun days.

When I started school the local kids walked home for lunch. Only on rainy days did we carry a lunch. Our sandwich was wrapped in waxed paper that had been the wrapper for a loaf of bread. We ate in the classroom right at our desks.

There were two buses to bring children to school. One served the children from Justa Farm and Edencroft areas. The other served the area up along Welsh Road and Pine and Moreland Roads.

There were only a few from that section of the township. Only those living one mile or more from school had bus service. Mr. Leedom and Mr. Wynkoop were our bus drivers.

Fashions

I remember wearing lace up high shoes to school with long stockings, and in winter, long underwear. I was always anxious for spring to come so I could wear my Mary Jane shoes and socks or anklets.

When I was little the girls all wore the same style hair-do. We parted our hair in the middle, bangs over the forehead, sides cut so tip of the ear was showing and hair was shingled in the back. It was cool and comfortable. When we were nine or ten the style changed to parting the hair on the side. Sometimes, to dress up, a big hair bow was added or a ribbon around the head with a bow tied on top. Hair cuts were about twenty five or thirty five cents at Mr. Markley's barber shop. Permanent waves came much later for those of us with straight hair.

I used to wear panty dresses. A pair of pants matching the dress material was worn over our underwear. We were very modest. Some of my dresses were made by a dressmaker from new material or a dress of my mother's that had been taken apart. We didn't have extensive wardrobes. When we came home from school or church we immediately changed to our play clothes which were the ones that were faded or too short, or too old to wear when we were dressed up.

Vacations

Vacations were a day here and a day there, unplanned. Once a year I got to the seashore. We'd get to Fox Chase, get a bus to Frankford, ride the elevated train to 2nd and Market Street, walk down the hill to the river, ride the ferry boat to Camden and get a train to the shore. About three or four hours later reverse the procedure and come home. It was a long day. Once or twice a neighbor drove to the shore and invited us to go along. That was easier.

The 4th of July was a "vacation day" too. A whole quarter to spend. My kind of ride usually cost a nickel and a beautiful fireworks display were exciting. A Sunday school picnic might also be considered a vacation day.

I bought my first car in 1948, a two door Chevrolet, silver gray. I loved to drive and the urge to travel took over. I'd work all year and try to save enough money to take a summer vacation.

It Wasn't Easy Keeping House

We had radios and ice boxes, no television or electric refrigerators. A pan was kept under the ice box to catch the water as the ice melted. Big puddles were on the floor if we forgot to check the contents of the pan. In winter we cooked on cast iron stoves that burned wood and coal. The stove also heated the kitchen and made a nice warm spot where we could take our Saturday night bath. In summer we used a kerosene stove which did not generate that much heat, but we still got a bath. Our house was heated by a hot air furnace which burned coal and wood. The coal

man delivered the coal, dumping it into a chute. I liked to watch the coal slide down to the bin in the cellar. Registers (grates) in the floor allowed hot air to enter the rooms. It was difficult to maintain an even temperature with hot air

I was raised on a schedule. Monday was wash day, Tuesday, Wednesday was sprinkling and ironing the clothes, Thursday was to clean upstairs, Friday was to clean downstairs, Saturday was baking day and scrub the kitchen floor and also deliver a pie and cake to the minister at the Presbyterian manse.

Wash day meant heating several buckets of water on the stove and filling the washing machine. No automatic one in those days. Next we filled two big tubs with water to rinse the clothes, then wring the water from the clothes and take them outdoors to hang on the clothes line. In winter the clothes were frozen stiff and often were hard to unpin. A wringer attached to the washing machine helped get more water out of the clothes before hanging them out. On rainy days we hung the wet clothes in the cellar to dry.

On Tuesday the clothes were sprinkled and rolled up tight. The ironing took nearly two days to complete since wash and wear hadn't been made yet. We used an iron that had to be heated on the stove and as it cooled it needed to be reheated. Later we had an electric iron. Many of the houses on Murray Avenue did not have running water. There were wells and the water was pumped by hand, but it was good and cold. Later we became more up to date when the pipes were installed in the street and piped into our house. We had "running water" inside. Also most of the houses had no bathroom facilities inside, hence the need for outhouses in the yard and chamber pots under the bed for night time emergencies.

Vacuum cleaners weren't in our homes either. Carpet sweepers and brooms were used to clean rugs and carpets. In spring or fall the rugs were rolled up and hung over the clothesline. Using a rug beater to whack the dirt out of the rug was kind of like a game for us kids. Mattresses were taken off the beds and were beaten too. Dust sure did fly!

Higher Education

I did win a \$1200 scholarship to Beaver College in Jenkintown where I got a B.S. degree in Education. I took courses with Temple University and Penn State and earned more than enough credits to acquire a Masters Equivalency. I majored in Early Childhood Education. I did practice teaching in Cheltenham and Jenkintown districts and Germantown Friends School. I went back to Lower Moreland and I began teaching in the very same room where I began as a pupil. I taught 3rd grade one year, 2nd grade for six years and the remainder of the thirty-seven and a half years at Lower Moreland I taught 1st grade.

The "Old" Days

Buying extra milk and cream from the milkman meant homemade ice cream! It was hard work turning the handle to make the paddles churn the milk and cream, but well worth the effort when the mixture was done. I got to lick the paddle and later I got a big dish of ice cream. Another

homemade product was root beer. We didn't do it often, but I remember once a bottle "blew its top".

In the good old days doctors actually made house calls if someone was sick. They charged all of two or three dollars. Doc would come in with his bag of pills and powders. He'd give you the medicine with directions on what to do and even come back for another visit if the case was serious enough. If someone had a contagious disease, a sign was put on the door and the family was quarantined to prevent the spread of disease.

There was no mail delivery. We walked to the post office which was in Clayton's store. We had Box 75. There was morning and afternoon mail. Bethayres and Huntingdon Valley each had its own post office. Later they were combined and we had the longest address in the continental US. For a while a mailman really walked the streets and brought our mail.

In winter we had a great time sledding down the steep hill at the high school where the Middle School gym now stands. What a ride it was all the way to the woods. Taking a walk around the block was another way to spend a nice evening. We'd wave to the neighbors who were sitting on their porches. Walking along the railroad tracks along the Pennypack in Bryn Athyn made the walk a little longer.

Once in a while Daddy, Mom and I went out to eat. Usually it was to Horn and Hardarts Automat. My favorite meal was a pot of baked beans, a cup of hot chocolate and maybe a piece of cherry pie for dessert. What a big thrill that was.



I remember the Dodge car Daddy had when I was little. It was open to the elements but curtains could be hooked to the side if necessary. Once we were coming home from a Sunday School picnic when it began to rain. But before Dad got all the curtains attached, the rain stopped, so we got wet. Later he drove an Essex and later still a '35 Chevy, and still later I learned to drive it.

[Photo: Our Dodge – I'm the baby]

One winter it was 20 degrees below zero. No school. My cousin and I delivered quarts of creamed chicken and chocolate pudding to neighbors because the lunchroom was closed too.

We had a party line telephone service. Three or four families could be on the same line. We each had our own special ring...2 short...1 long...a short and a long ring etc. When calling we got the operator. One operator was a regular news reporter. She held conversations with the caller. "Oh, she's not home today...went to see her sister." "She's at Mary's place. I'll put your call through to there." The exchange was in a house on the corner of Murray Avenue and the Pike. Bell Telephone needed more space, so they bought Ernie Beck's property on Murray Avenue and tore down the nice old stone house and built a new building. Originally we had Bethayres as our

name, but then a zero was added to the number and we became Chapel Hill. That was confusing, so the name was changed again. This time it was Wilson. Then it was changed to all numbers.

Local transportation was supplied by Reading buses or the train at Bethayres Station. The big old steam trains shook the whole station and platform as they pulled into the area, steam was hissing. That scared me a little. For the amazing price of 59 cents it was possible to buy a round trip shopper's ticket to Philadelphia on Saturday.

Reading buses served us along the Pike. They ran from Fox Chase to Southampton and would stop anywhere along the road to let you on or off, no specified stops. It was very convenient and cheap, about 10 cents.

Odds and Ends

Home deliveries: Yerkes meat truck (refrigerated); hucksters, bakers (Bond, Freihofers, Suntheimers); milkman, iceman, coal man, rag man (bought old rags and newspapers)

Barber Shop: Men came out smelling like Bay Rum; kids haircut twenty five cents or thirty five cents at Markley's shop.

Entertainment: Summer carnival, minstrel shows, fire company suppers, church suppers, strawberry festivals, high school plays, Bethayres baseball team.

A clothing peddler, Max Miller, came around weekly in his truck loaded with ladies dresses, buy now, pay later. He also measured the men for his tailor, carried swatches of cloth for men's suits, and then had suits made to order. Imagine a three piece suit custom made for about thirty five dollars today!

Before Murray Avenue was widened, there used to be a hitching post on our property. I remember a man named Preston Hewlitt who owned True Reformers' Hall. I'm not sure if he was there to collect rent, but he used to hitch his horse and buggy there.

Uncle Abie, the man who lived next door in summer, used to take us for rides in his Model-T Ford. We'd ride along back roads where the road banks were loaded with blackberry bushes. Taking a big pan, I'd climb up among the thorns and stickers to pick the berries. When we got the berries home, Mom would make jelly or jam.

Other Locations and Residents

We had many large families in town while I was growing up. I remember:

Danenberger, Elmer and Bertha. Their children were John, Eleanor, Kathryn, Lolita (Litty; she had polio in first grade and missed school for a year), Elmer "Buster", Alvin, Jean, Carolyn, Elaine and June. They lived in the big white house in Fettersmill Square.

Fesmire, Wilmer and Ida. They lived on the Pike just below the Lady Washington Inn. Their children are Roger, Aarol, Lloyd, Albert, Warren and Marian. Albert and Lloyd were ministers.

Fesmire, Pete and Mary. They lived next door to Wilmer and Ida. Their children were Russell, Ernest, Norman, Ada, Betty, Jean and Chester. At first Pete and Wilmer worked together in the building business, but later split up.

Saint, Lawrence and Katherine. They lived across the Pike. Their children were Sam, a commercial pilot, Rachel, a missionary, Phil, a chalk artist and preacher, Daniel, David, inventor of the Graco Baby Swing, Steve, Nate, a missionary in South America who was killed by the natives, and Ben, a preacher.

Flack. The children are Walter, George, a Lower Moreland policeman, Ebbie and Chester. They lived on Red Lion Road, and Mrs. Flack used to hit the big fire alarm to gather the firemen.

Cataldo. The children were Fannie, Joe, Phillip, Lucy, Margaret, Anthony (Sparky, a Lower Moreland School District principal). They lived at 2589 Murray Avenue.

Pletcher. They lived in Bethayres at the bend in the Pike near the intersection. The children were Harry, Charlotte, Russell, Hammond, George (a Reading bus driver), Walter "Chirp), Mary and Elva.

Hutchins. They lived on "Tin Can Alley", the former Chestnut Street down by the tavern. Some of their children were Frank, Bill, Mabel, Barbara, Woody, Charlie, Margaret, Jeannette, Herbie, and Betty.

Other families in the town were Tinari, Walsh, Van Horn, Worthington, Campoli, Festa, Barrett, Trotter, Jefferies, Freeman, Montrella and Boyce.

Cypress Avenue. The family on the corner of Red Lion and Cypress was Bertha Fautleroy's family. Tilghmans were back there along with three other families.

Red Lion Road. Franklin L. Hoke lived across from the fire house there. Mrs. Flack lived next to the Hokes. Then Mrs. Walsh and the Tinari's.

Montanye lived down near the Redmile Tavern at the intersection of Chestnut Street and the Pike.

At the Pike intersection there was Doering's Store, and across the street Ike Tomlinson had a little luncheonette and next to that was a garage. Across the street was the Reading busses garage. On the other corner was Stevenson's Real Estate. Coming up the Pike would be Pletchers. The gas station was next to the luncheonette. Where the Pike crossed the railroad tracks, the gates came down and Rosie and her dad would come out and swing the lantern. Then they moved when the bridge was built across the tracks. Somebody said they moved to Jenkintown. There was a big hotel down there, the Spread Eagle. Leedom's Lumber and Coal Yard was where Gloria Dei Church is.

More Memories

Anytime I am riding over Terwood Road and pass the Raytharn Farm, I think back to the good times I had there. I would go home with Lenhart's after church and have dinner with them and spend the day with the girls. Occasionally I would stay overnight. Farm life was interesting. Feed the chickens, gather eggs. I vaguely remember feeding the pigs. There was a springhouse there. A long flight of steps going deep into the ground and each step down it got a little cooler. This was an outdoor refrigerator where they could keep food nice and cold in the spring water. One day when I was there, Lester hitched a pony to the pony cart and took us for a ride. My one and only ride in a pony cart, and I loved it! I always enjoyed my visits to the farm.

Ruth Markley had a swing and trapeze bar in her back yard. We'd take turns on the swing and then try some stunts on the trapeze. I became pretty proficient on the bar and had thoughts of joining the circus, but I'm sure my mom would not have approved. There was also a shed, a wash house, in the back yard which we used to play in.

The Methodist Church young people had a junior and senior Epworth League for young people. I was in the junior branch. Before Easter each year we sold penny Easter eggs. One cent each, or one dollar for a whole box. I remember walking all around Huntingdon Valley and Bethayres with the eggs, knocking on doors and selling eggs, sometimes only five eggs at a time. We made more at one cent each, but selling a whole boxful at once was a great achievement. One dollar for 120 eggs!

My Teaching Career

My teaching career really began in March of 1944 when Mr. Hoke called Beaver College and asked if I could come to Lower Moreland to substitute for a teacher who had been absent more than present in the first grade class. I received permission from Dean Higgins with the understanding I would attend two late afternoon classes, get work assignments for two more courses and complete Miss Ableson's two courses in summer school which I did.

If I remember correctly the pay wasn't great but I had a job! The first check, about thirty five dollars, I gave to my mother and she was able to purchase a spring coat, a dress and a hat. The next check I gave to my dad and he bought a new 3 piece suit. After doing that for my parents as a thank you for all they had done for me, I began to pay board. I felt like a "big shot."

When I began teaching, the teachers really had an assortment of duties to perform. Along with the monthly attendance which was so full of math, we also handled the lunch money for the students who paid by the week.

[Photo: Margaret and some of her students at Red Lion School making colonial ice cream]



We collected money from the students who were starting a savings account with the Huntingdon Valley Federal Bank, and we assisted the county nurse with the weighing and measuring of our students. We had large bulletin boards which required ideas and time. Few commercial decorations and ideas were available, so we had to be pretty creative. Since there was no full time nurse available, we took care of injuries and emergencies as best we could. I guess you could say we were nurses, secretaries, bankers, policemen, decorators and substitute mothers as well as teachers.

Teachers' duties were AM and PM lunch and recess duties, no planning period, but we had fun too. Alice Ridgway and I helped dip up ice cream for cones in the cafeteria; vanilla fudge was just becoming popular. Peg Johnson and I took turns being cashier when the high school kids started coming. One morning when Alice and I were bringing our students in the back door of Red Lion School we heard our kids saying, "We saw it drop out, we saw it drop out!" We didn't know what they were talking about. They saw a calf being born! The kids had been back by the fence. We had no idea. Eddie Schmidt didn't even know that the cow was having a calf.

Murray Avenue History

On Murray Avenue, the Methodist Church was on the corner of Red Lion Road. Cleve Ramson lived in the Moyer's house, 2552 Murray Avenue and had his garden where 2540 is now. The big stone house where Redmile's lived (2536) used to have a family named Skinner living there. I used to take piano lessons from someone named Fader who lived there. I was afraid of her because she was drunk sometimes. Then the Masts lived there before the Redmile's. Where the telephone building is, a Dr. Olds had a barn there and a big stone house. It faced the hill part of Murray Avenue.

There was an apartment across the street from the telephone building. We called it "Colored Hall". It was really named True Reformers' Hall. There were six apartments there, two on each floor. The plumbing, a sink in the hallway, was the running water on each floor. The First Baptist Church was next door, and still is to this day, and the next house was the parsonage originally. It was torn down for the entrance to the school. The Trotters lived there and then the Flemings.

Where the ramp goes into Murray Avenue School, there was a garage there owned by a man named Updyke. When that was taken down Enna Messina's house was built in its place. Her front room was a store. That came down when they remodeled the school. A beautiful auditorium with an organ was added to the school. The fire of 1967 destroyed it.

Lodges' red brick house used to be next to the Murray Avenue School, the north side. The school purchased the property and tore it down to build the gym in 1940. The Pletcher family may have lived there for a while before occupying 2581 Murray Avenue.

The Dunlap family lived next door to me. They had an outhouse and garage. This was their summer home. They lived in the city on Parrish Street and came out here to get away from the summer heat. Mrs. Dunlap's father was the oldest man I knew. He was 92 and fought and was wounded in the Civil War. He chewed tobacco and would spit tobacco juice on my feet.

The Van Horn family lived at 2558 Murray Avenue. Harvey was the oldest, then Walter who died at age 10 of diphtheria, then Bob and then Bill.

The house at 2520 was Wunderlich's house when I was growing up. It had a wooden fence around it, and Frank Wunderlich and I could just squeeze around to go back and forth.

Red Lion School History

In 1892 when the school was built, the bathrooms were down in the basement. The seats on the toilets would rise up a little and automatically flush. When the school was enlarged in the 1950's the original front end was torn off and a white brick addition was added. The upstairs auditorium was made into classrooms, and the bathrooms were brought upstairs into what were the coat rooms. An outside fire escape was added. I didn't like seeing that far down and it scared me.

When I started school in 1928 every Friday morning we would have an assembly in the auditorium. Mrs. Isabel Williams was the piano player and she was fantastic. We would salute the flag, read the Bible, say the Lord's Prayer and then Miss Wooley would lead the singing. When I attended school, we learned many circle games: Drop the Hankie, Cat and Mouse, In and Out the Windows, Three Deep, and relay races.

Every Friday all the classes marched upstairs to the auditorium for assembly. We sang a hymn, a teacher read the Bible, we repeated the Lord's Prayer, we saluted the flag and then we sang a few songs. Miss Nielsen wanted each teacher to have her class perform some sort of program at least once during the year. I loved doing that with the kids. Alice Ridgway and I usually worked together on this project.

The Red Lion building was remodeled and enlarged several times while I taught there. Eventually the cafeteria used the entire basement area. The auditorium and stage became four classrooms, and the oldest part, the stone front, was torn off and a two story white brick front added. At one time during all this construction we used part of the boiler room with dirt floors as a classroom. The cellar doors were the exit.

The School Cafeteria

When I attended Red Lion School, the town kids took a lunch bag on rainy days only. We walked home and back at lunch time. When I was in fourth grade, 1931, because of the Depression a lot of kids didn't have lunches. I guess it was Miss Lillian Nielson, the teacher/principal, who got interested in it. How or why they asked my mother I had no idea.

[Photo: Margaret's mother, Annie Williams, outside Red Lion School]



Miss Haines, a second grade teacher who lived in Jenkintown, brought food from a Horn & Hardarts there. Milk jugs with soup, and for a nickel a bowl you could buy soup. Then Mom was asked to dish it up and heat it. It was every other day at first; then Miss Nielson thought it should be every day and have something besides soup. That started the platters. Maybe beef stew on some bread. Then they added cocoa and graham crackers. Miss Nielson was really basically behind the whole thing. All this was at Red Lion School in the basement.

I remember Mom baking fifteen pies a day. She rolled out the crust with lard. She made several different kinds, banana cream, chocolate cream, cherry, even Boston cream pies. And she was famous for her Floating Island Pudding.

In the basement, there was a girl's end and a boy's end and a small storage area. There were dishes there, so they washed the dishes and set it up. Later they enlarged it. Platters used to be 7 cents, then 9 cents. Meat was rationed and more expensive to buy. It went to 10 cents and then they upped it to 15 cents. My cousin, Harvey Van Horn, came up and washed the dishes. He also worked at Saints. He had a lot of odd jobs. Uncle Will mashed the potatoes. Lester Lenhart's father, Morris, worked at Raythorn Farm and would bring over potatoes and fresh vegetables such as lima beans and corn to the school. Everything was prepared fresh. Mom peeled I don't know how many potatoes in her life, but Uncle Will put an extension on the potato masher. The kettle was too heavy to pick up so it was on the floor.

Mom was also famous for her platters. She made creamed chicken, mashed potatoes, peas and coleslaw. That was one platter. On Fridays there was a minced ham sandwich, fruit salad and baked beans. Miss Nielson liked to make the menus, but the meals had to be colorful. They couldn't be just anything.

On the day before Thanksgiving and Christmas vacation, Mom would cook a full course dinner that cost only 25 cents. The men from the bank, the insurance man, milkman and others would come to the cafeteria for this.

When Virginia Montanye, Eva and Mary Pletcher went to the high school which was on Murray Avenue, there still was no cafeteria. They wanted to go back to Red Lion School to get lunches. So they asked Mr. Hoke if they could do it. So Mr. Hoke gave permission. It was just seventh and eighth grade. When these girls got to ninth grade, the cafeteria was made for the high school too.

Mom never knew who was coming. How she did it, I never knew. But she never ran out or had many leftovers. She had to do most of the buying and use some of that money. We would go down to Frankford every Friday to the Penn Fruit because Clayton's store didn't have that much. We'd load the car with cases of things we would need. At the end of the year Miss Nielson would always come down to our house to go over the books with Mom and me. She checked the books to make sure we came out right. One year we could not account for one lousy penny. I said "I'll give you my penny!" She wouldn't take it. She wanted to know where that penny went! She was a stickler. As for my mom, at first her wages and food purchases came out of the money taken from the lunch money paid by the kids each day.

On her own, she had wedding receptions at a church or a home plus doing some church dinners. My mom was really a good cook. Unfortunately, I didn't follow in her footsteps! Mom retired in 1968 after 37 ½ years at Red Lion. Her top salary was \$3,000.

The fire was in October, 1967. It was a horrible sight to watch that fire spread and in the final stages to see the walls collapse. Murray Avenue was mobbed with people watching the disaster. Many people were crowded into my front yard too. Fortunately the wind was blowing toward the woods behind the school, so the houses on our street were not in danger, but we could feel the heat!

There was smoke and water damage to the old original high school. It was finally torn down and a new larger building was constructed, but my old high school was no longer there.



[Photo: Lower Moreland Middle School fire, Murray Avenue, October 1967]